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PREFACE

From 2005 to 2008, a research project on natural environments and human activities was conducted in Namibia and its surrounding area with a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Project No. 17251001 headed by Dr. Kazuharu Mizuno, Kyoto University), provided by the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports, Culture, and Technology of Japan. This book presents the results of this research endeavor.

Arid areas such as the Namib Desert along the Atlantic coast cover large parts of Namibia in southern Africa. The people in this arid area are profoundly influenced by the natural environment in which they live. Global climatic changes affect people all over the world, and changes in the global and local natural environments affect the livelihoods of the inhabitants of Namibia as well. This study estimates the effect of environmental changes on Namibians and considers the effectiveness of various countermeasures against environmental change. It is vital to understand the current natural environment and its component parts, such as the climate, topography, and vegetation of Namibia, and to assess the impact of the recent environmental changes.

Namibia is home to a number of ethnic groups. Communities of Owambo, Herero, Himba, Damara, and Zemba can be found here, all with distinctive lifestyles and ways of using the natural environment around their villages. Animals such as desert elephants and termites, and plants such as the Mopane forests are closely interwoven with the activities of the people. This book examines the relationships between nature (topography, climate and vegetation) and the population, and explores how environmental changes affect the livelihoods of local communities.

I received assistance from many people, particularly Ms. Aki Kishida. I sincerely acknowledge and thank all of these people and institutes.

The authors hope that this book offers new and useful information about Namibia's nature and people and stimulates future research in the region.

K. Mizuno

